

Meeting Date: January 11, 2007

Agenda Item No. 7

Agenda Item: Big Game: Nonbiological Rules for all Big Game Animals

Approved by: _____

Prepared by: Brad Compton

Background:

The Commission considers changes to non-biological rules in January each year. Non-biological rules include: method of take, equipment restrictions, allocation of controlled hunt permits/tags, etc. Biological rules, considered in March, include: seasons, bag limits, sex restrictions, and species restrictions.

RULE: 13.01.17.100.03(a). Use of bait for black bears.

ISSUE: Trapping rules [13.01.16.400.03(a)] prevent the use of domestic or wild game birds, game animals, game fish, or protected nongame wildlife as bait. Black bear baiting rules do not differentiate between the use of domestic or wild game animals, game birds, or game fish. For clarification and consistency, the Department proposes to adopt the trapping rules definition of prohibited bait for baiting black bears. Additionally, enforcement personnel have requested the proposed change to assist with enforcement of illegal baiting practices.

RULE: 13.01.08.410. Unlawful methods of take.

ISSUE: Most of the current big game hunting equipment restrictions for archery, muzzleloader, and centerfire were adopted by the Idaho Fish & Game Commission in 1991. Many changes in equipment technology and availability have occurred since that time. Recently the Department has received numerous requests to review the current equipment restrictions.

In November 2006, the Commission held a public meeting workshop in Lewiston to learn about hunting equipment technology and to hear from hunters. Based on input received during this meeting, the Commission wanted to hear from additional hunters on a number of potential changes to equipment restrictions.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Idaho Code 67-52 (Idaho Administrative Procedure Act) governs the process for considering, adopting, and implementing nonbiological rules. The Commission has clear authority to establish methods of take for big game animals.

Public Involvement Process:

In addition to sportsmen involved in the November Commission Workshop, a survey (attached) was distributed via regional meetings and open houses. Additionally, the survey was made available through the Department web site. Results of the survey will be presented during the Commission meeting.

Staff Recommendation:

Public involvement activities are ongoing. The Department will review public comment and formulate recommendations to be presented during the Commission meeting.

Justification:

Commission action required to adopt proposed rule changes.

Idaho Department of Fish & Game

Big Game Hunting Equipment Restrictions Public Comment Form

Most of the current big game hunting equipment restrictions for archery, muzzleloader, and centerfire were adopted by the Idaho Fish & Game Commission in 1991. Many changes in equipment technology and availability have occurred since that time. Recently the Department has received numerous requests to review the current equipment restrictions.

In November 2006, the Commission held a public meeting workshop in Lewiston to learn about hunting equipment technology and to hear from hunters. Based on input received during this meeting, the Commission wants to hear from additional hunters on a number of potential changes to equipment restrictions. The Commission will be meeting January 10-12 in Boise to consider equipment rule changes for big game hunting. Any rule changes would take effect beginning with the 2007 big game seasons.

Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey. Survey results will be summarized and presented to the Commission.

Centerfire Equipment

Electronic Devices: Currently, Idaho rules prohibit the use of any electronic device attached to a firearm or scope. Some hunters, particularly those with poor eyesight, have requested a rule change to allow for the use of scopes with lighted reticles (e.g. "Red Dot" scopes). It is currently legal to use lighted reticle scopes for hunting upland game birds (such as turkeys) in Idaho, but not for big game.

1. Should lighted reticle scopes be allowed for hunting big game in Idaho?

☐ No ☐ No Opinion ☐ Yes

Maximum Caliber Restriction: Currently, Idaho does not impose a maximum caliber restriction for firearms used to hunt big game. Some hunters are concerned about the "fair chase" aspects of long-range cartridges and have requested a rule change to prohibit the use of 50 caliber or larger centerfire cartridges.

2. Should Idaho restrict the use of 50 caliber or larger centerfire cartridges for hunting big game in Idaho?

☐ No ☐ No Opinion ☐ Yes

Archery Equipment

Let-off: Currently, Idaho prohibits the use of archery bows with greater than 65% let-off for hunting big game. All other western states allow bows with greater than 65%. Additionally, the availability of bows with 65% let-off is becoming more limited. Harvest information from other western states suggests that increasing allowable let-off would have no effect on hunter effectiveness or success rates.

3. Should Idaho allow the use of bows with greater than 65% let-off for hunting big game?

☐ No ☐ No Opinion ☐ Yes

Arrow Weight: Currently, Idaho prohibits the use of arrows weighing less than 400 grains for hunting big game. Some hunters, particularly children and women, have requested allowing the use of lighter arrows for better arrow flight. The states of Montana, Utah, and Washington don't allow the use of arrows weighing less than 300 grains. Other western states do not have a rule regarding arrow weight. Some hunters are concerned light arrows do not provide adequate penetration. Harvest information from other western states suggests that decreasing the allowable arrow weight would have no effect on hunter effectiveness or success rates.

4. Should Idaho reduce the minimum allowable arrow weight for hunting big game from 400 grains to 300 grains?

☐ No ☐ No Opinion ☐ Yes

Arrow Length: Currently, Idaho prohibits the use of arrows less than 12 inches in length for hunting big game. Some hunters have requested increasing this minimum length to 24 inches to be more consistent with other states and to help ensure against using arrows that are too light, or too short, for adequate penetration. Increasing the minimum arrow length from 12 inches to 24 inches is unlikely to affect hunter effectiveness or success rates.

5. Should Idaho increase the minimum allowable arrow length from 12 inches to 24 inches for hunting big game?

☐ No ☐ No Opinion ☐ Yes

Muzzleloader Equipment

Traditional Muzzleloader Definition: In 2001, Idaho began implementing traditional muzzleloader big game hunting seasons to offset the improved technology of modern day muzzleloaders and to maintain muzzleloader hunting opportunity. Traditional muzzleloaders are defined as only being loaded with loose black powder, Pyrodex, or synthetic black powder; only being loaded with a patched round ball or conical non-jacketed projectile comprised solely of lead or lead alloy (sabots not allowed); and having an exposed pivoting hammer. Some newer muzzleloaders have an exposed pivoting hammer 'in-line' with the ignition source and barrel, and are currently legal to use in traditional muzzleloader hunts. Some hunters have requested the definition of a

traditional muzzleloader be changed to only allow for muzzleloaders with pivoting hammers located along the side of the firearm (e.g. “sidelocks”).

6. Should Idaho change the definition of a traditional muzzleloader to only allow for “sidelock” muzzleloaders?

☐ No ☐ No Opinion ☐ Yes

Muzzleloader Opportunity: In the late 1980s, Idaho offered numerous big game hunts for muzzleloaders and over 10,000 hunters participated annually. Recently, the number of special muzzleloader hunts for big game and the number of muzzleloader hunters have declined. Reduced mule deer numbers, improved muzzleloader technology, and relatively high muzzleloader hunter success are primary reasons for declining muzzleloader hunting opportunity. The Commission is considering whether to restrict all special season big game muzzleloader hunts to traditional muzzleloader. In-line muzzleloaders would remain legal in any-weapon hunts. In short-range weapon hunts, only traditional muzzleloaders would be allowed. Converting all regular muzzleloader hunts to traditional muzzleloader hunts would allow the Commission to offer additional special season muzzleloader seasons.

7. Should Idaho restrict all special muzzleloader hunting seasons to traditional muzzleloaders?

☐ No ☐ No Opinion ☐ Yes

Muzzleloader Caliber & Projectiles: Currently, Idaho allows the use of 45 caliber muzzleloaders for hunting deer, pronghorn, and mountain lion; and the use of 50 caliber for elk, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, or black bear. Additionally, Idaho restricts muzzleloader projectiles to no less than .428 caliber. Some hunters are concerned that 45 caliber round balls are inadequate for big game. Some hunters are also concerned that light weight bullets designed for pistols do not ensure adequate penetration on big game. Some hunters have requested that current rules be changed to eliminate the use of 45 caliber muzzleloaders and to include a minimum projectile weight to ensure adequate projectiles are used. Research confirms that heavy, well-constructed bullets perform better in penetration tests.

The Commission will consider the following change:

- projectiles must be a minimum of 49 caliber or have a minimum weight of 240 grains for hunting deer, pronghorn, or mountain lion; and
- projectiles must be a minimum of 49 caliber or have a minimum weight of 300 grains for hunting elk, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, or black bear

8. Should Idaho implement the above listed caliber and projectile requirements for hunting big game?

☐ No ☐ No Opinion ☐ Yes

About You – Please answer the following questions.

9. Do you currently live in Idaho?

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Do you hunt big game in Idaho?

☐ Yes ☐ No

11. Which weapon do you primarily hunt with? (*check one*)

☐ Centerfire
☐ Muzzleloader
☐ Archery

12. If you hunt with a muzzleloader, which type do you primarily use? (*check one*)

☐ In-line
☐ Sidelock ('traditional')
☐ I do not hunt with a muzzleloader.

13. If you hunt with archery equipment, which type do you primarily use? (*check one*)

☐ Compound
☐ Recurve or Longbow
☐ I do not hunt with archery equipment

14. Would you like to receive e-mail information updates from Fish & Game?

☐ Yes (include e-mail address below) ☐ No

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Thank You